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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [YI](#) [EZ](#) [EUN](#)  
SUBJECT: CZECHS INTERESTED IN JOINING KOSOVO STEERING GROUP

REF: A. STATE 12026  
[1](#)B. 07 PRAGUE 1151

Classified By: POLEC Counselor Michael Dodman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Embassy Officers met February 8 with Czech MFA Political Director, Martin Povejsil, who confirmed Czech interest in participating in the International Steering Group (ISG). With their upcoming January 2009 EU Presidency and their substantial military involvement in KFOR, the Czechs are particularly committed to work constructively to address the situation in Kosovo, as well as the wider Balkans. The GOCR has been laying the groundwork with the Czech parliament to ensure that once Kosovo makes a declaration of independence the GOCR will be able to respond without this becoming a domestic political debate. This support has now been secured and the Czechs plan to act "at the right moment" and "in harmony" with the majority of other EU states. Whether or not they will recognize Kosovo in the first wave depends on what the first wave looks like.

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Czechs Express Interest in ISG  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Povejsil confirmed that there is a general consensus within the GOCR that the Czechs should be involved in this steering group, if and when it is formed. He noted the situation in the Balkans is one of the five Czech priorities for its EU Presidency beginning January 2009 (Ref B). Thus, Czech officials feel it is particularly important that they are involved in the ISG from its inception. With respect to the two conditions for membership - a commitment to recognize Kosovo in the first wave and a significant contribution of resources - the Czechs believe that the first requirement will be tricky for everyone, although they are confident that they more than satisfy the second requirement. Povejsil cited their current significant civilian and military contributions as evidence of their commitment (Note: The Czech have approximately 430 personnel deployed in KFOR, making this the largest deployment of Czech forces abroad, just slightly ahead of their commitment of troops in Afghanistan. End Note.)

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Timing of Czech Recognition  
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[1](#)3. (C) On the subject of timing, Povejsil noted that during Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg's visit to Kosovo January 14, Schwarzenberg made clear that the Czech Republic would recognize Kosovo "in harmony" with other EU member states. Povejsil understands that a declaration from Kosovo is likely to occur around February 15, which would then allow the EU Foreign Ministers to discuss this topic during the February

18 GAERC. Previous to our meeting, we had heard from Czech MFA officials that the Czechs would likely be in the second wave of countries to recognize Kosovo. However, Povejsil told us that if a majority of EU countries recognize Kosovo immediately, then the Czechs may be able to act with this group. He was clear though that if only a handful of EU members recognize Kosovo early on, the Czechs are not likely to be among the "pioneers."

14. (C) Povejsil also noted that Schwarzenberg has been laying the domestic political groundwork and building consensus for the government position on Kosovo. Schwarzenberg met with the foreign committee in parliament to discuss Kosovo within the last week and while there was some initial concern that a few radical Czech parliamentarians might try to cause difficulties for the GOCR on Kosovo recognition, according to Povejsil the discussion went well and Schwarzenberg believes he has sufficient parliamentary support for the government to go forward with recognition. The actual decision when and how to recognize can therefore be made by the government. Likewise, Povejsil said the final decision in joining the ISG would likely be taken at the government level. Povejsil made clear that the MFA supports joining the ISG, but would not predict how or when the cabinet would decide. We reminded Povejsil that the ISG is expected to meet soon after a declaration of independence and encouraged him to get back to us soon with a response.

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